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REMARKS

Claims 15-18 have been canceled herein, and new claims 35-38 have been added. Accordingly, claims 1-14 and 19-38 are now pending.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough review and consideration given to the subject application in the first examination on the merits. In response, Applicant has made a number of amendments to correct typographical errors noted by the Examiner. Applicant has also amended the specification to clarify the priority claim of the subject application.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections set forth in the first Office action for the reasons presented below.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 6, 9, 21, 24, 30 and 34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 6, 9, 21, 24, 30 and 34 have been amended to provide clear antecedent basis and properly define Markush groups. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the § 112, second paragraph, rejection of these claims.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-5, 7-11, 13, 14, 19, 20, 22-26, 28-30 and 33-34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Peddie et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,351,028). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As amended, independent claims 1, 16 and 34 each recite *a communication system having no dedicated wiring between the customer interface and the control assembly*. As described in the subject application, this recited feature is advantageous as it requires only minimal installation. See, e.g., paragraph 0102. In other words, by configuring the system such that no communication between the customer interface and the control assembly is required, or by configuring the customer interface and the control assembly for communicating via a power line carrier or via wireless means, the need for dedicated wiring between the control assembly and the customer interface is eliminated. This, in turn, reduces the time and expense for system installation since there is no need to run dedicated wiring between the customer interface and the control assembly.

In contrast, Peddie clearly discloses a customer interface/display unit 24 that communicates with a control unit 12 via three dedicated wires (unreferenced). See Figs. 1 and 2 of Peddie. Accordingly, Peddie fails to disclose a communication system having no dedicated wiring between the customer interface and the control assembly, and therefore fails to anticipate independent claims 1, 16 and 34 and the claims depending therefrom.

For these reasons, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the § 102(b) rejection.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 6 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peddie et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,351,028) in view of Thornborough et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,817,131). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 6 and 21 are dependent from claims 1 and 16, respectively. The Examiner cites Thornborough as disclosing "managing the transfer of said utility service to a new customer or between customers using said communication system." Thornborough, however, does not remedy the shortcomings of Peddie stated above. Thus, claims 6 and 21 are allowable for the same reasons presented above with respect to claims 1 and 16.

Claims 12 and 27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peddie et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,351,028) in view of Schelberg, Jr. et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,812,643). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 12 and 27 are dependent from claims 1 and 16, respectively. The Examiner relies on Schelberg, Jr. to disclose using a smart card to store said payment information. Schelberg, Jr., however, does not remedy the shortcomings of Peddie stated above. Thus, claims 12 and 27 are allowable for the same reasons presented above with respect to claims 1 and 16.

Claim 31 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peddie et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,351,028). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 31 is dependent from claim 16. While the Examiner relies on motivation related to software applications in rejecting Claim 31. The alleged motivation, however,

fails to remedy the shortcomings of Peddie stated above. Thus, claim 31 is allowable for the same reason presented above with respect to claim 16.

Claim 32 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Peddie et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,351,028) in view of Frew et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,803,632) in further view of Hogan (U.S. Pat. No. 5,699,528) in further view of McGregor et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,577,100). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner relies on Frew, Hogan, and McGregor to disclose an LCD display, navigation buttons, and multi-colored LED's, respectively. These references, alone or in combination, do not remedy the shortcomings of Peddie stated above. Thus, claim 32 is allowable for the same reason presented above with respect to claim 16.

NEW CLAIMS 35-38

By this Amendment, new claims 35-38 have been added. Independent claim 35 recites a communication system for a prepaid utility service, the system including a utility host for managing a customer account, a customer interface for displaying information regarding the customer account, and a control assembly for controlling the utility service, the utility host configured for communicating with the customer interface and with the control assembly, the communication system having no dedicated wiring between the customer interface and the control assembly. (Emphasis added). Thus, new claim 35 is allowable over the cited art for the same reasons as those presented above with respect to claims 1, 16 and 34.

Further, new claim 38 recites a method for communicating information relating to a utility service between a utility host, a customer interface, and a control assembly for

said utility service, the method comprising determining an amount of prepaid service remaining in a customer account, communicating the determined amount of prepaid service remaining in the customer account from the utility host to the customer interface for display to the customer, and communicating a disconnect command from the utility host to the control assembly when the amount of prepaid service in the customer account is exhausted. In contrast, the cited art fails to disclose or suggest a utility host that both (a) communicates the determined amount of prepaid service remaining in the customer account to the customer interface, and (b) communicates a disconnect command to the control assembly when the amount of prepaid service in the customer account is exhausted.

For these reasons, the Examiner is respectfully requested to allow new claims 35-38.

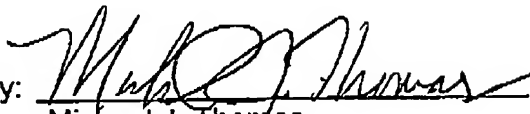
CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the

Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (314) 726-7500.

Respectfully submitted,

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